

Will County's 2040 road plan moves forward

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Will County's new long range transportation plan — Will Connects 2040 — got one step closer to being an official government document Tuesday, as the public works committee recommended approval.

Final approval of the plan, which took nearly two years to develop, is expected at the March 16 county board meeting.

Given the uncertainty of the proposed but shelved Illiana toll road project, the plan identifies transportation priorities and potential funding over the next 25 years, with and without the toll road.

It recommends a combination of road improvements, transit services and bike paths to get people to where they need to go.

"I'm glad to have the plan done and to share the county's needs with our partners," said Jeff Ronaldson, the county's director of transportation.

Project consultant Dan Meyers, of AECOM, said the plan will "become a vision for the county for transportation projects through 2040" and could be updated every five years.

It will be shared with the [Illinois Department of Transportation](#), Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, [PACE](#), Metra, and the Forest Preserve District of Will County, which incorporated a bike plan into the 2040 plan.

Public open houses were held throughout the planning process and Myers said he also consulted with the county's land use department to see where new developments are happening and what road improvements would be needed to accommodate them.

But committee member Jackie Traynere, D-Bolingbrook, said she also wanted to know what municipalities have planned to avoid the types of traffic issues that occurred when her community experienced a lot of development without addressing the roads.

"I want to know what areas are planned for development and make those roads a priority," she said.

"We are always in that situation where we can't control development and have to react," said committee member Cory Singer, R-Frankfort.

Myers told the committee, the plan is a "continued effort to be proactive and help municipalities."

According to the plan, if the Illiana toll road is built from I-55 in Wilmington to I-65 in Indiana, the county could focus on expanding its roads. These priorities would be widening Gougar Road to four lanes from Laraway Road to US Route 6, and constructing a new four-lane segment of Gougar Road from US 52 to Laraway Road.

[Will County sets legislative priorities](#)

With or without the Illiana, Laraway Road would have to be widened to four lanes from US 52 to Harlem Avenue, with an estimated cost of nearly \$255 million. Also, Briggs Street in Joliet, and Division Street in Lockport would be reconstructed.

If no toll road is built, the county would seek "relief valves" to improve east-west traffic, such as widening of Manhattan-Monee Road, from US 45 to I-57, and a new two-lane segment of Wilmington-Peotone Road, from

Ridgeland Avenue to Drecksler Road.

Interchanges also would need to be improved along I-80 at Briggs Street and Chicago Street.

Finally, the plan listed numerous road expansion projects for which no funding has been identified. This list includes:

- Widening 191st Street from LaGrange Road to Harlem Avenue.
- Widening Cedar Road, from Francis to Bruce Roads, and from Manhattan-Monee to Spencer Roads
- Widening Exchange Street, from Western Avenue to State Line Road in Crete.
- Widening Manhattan-Monee Road from Crete-Monee Road to State Street.
- Widening Wilmington-Peotone Road from Drecksler Road to I-57, from I-57 to Route 53, and Route 1 to Ridgeland Avenue.
- Extending Manhattan-Monee Road, from I-57 to Governors Highway.
- Extending Schoolhouse Road in New Lenox from Francis Road to US 6.

In other matters, the public works committee approved a \$1.5 million contract to P.T. Ferro Construction for the widening, resurfacing and signalization of the intersection of Laraway Road and Spencer Road in New Lenox Township, which could begin in mid-April, according to Ronaldson.

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